

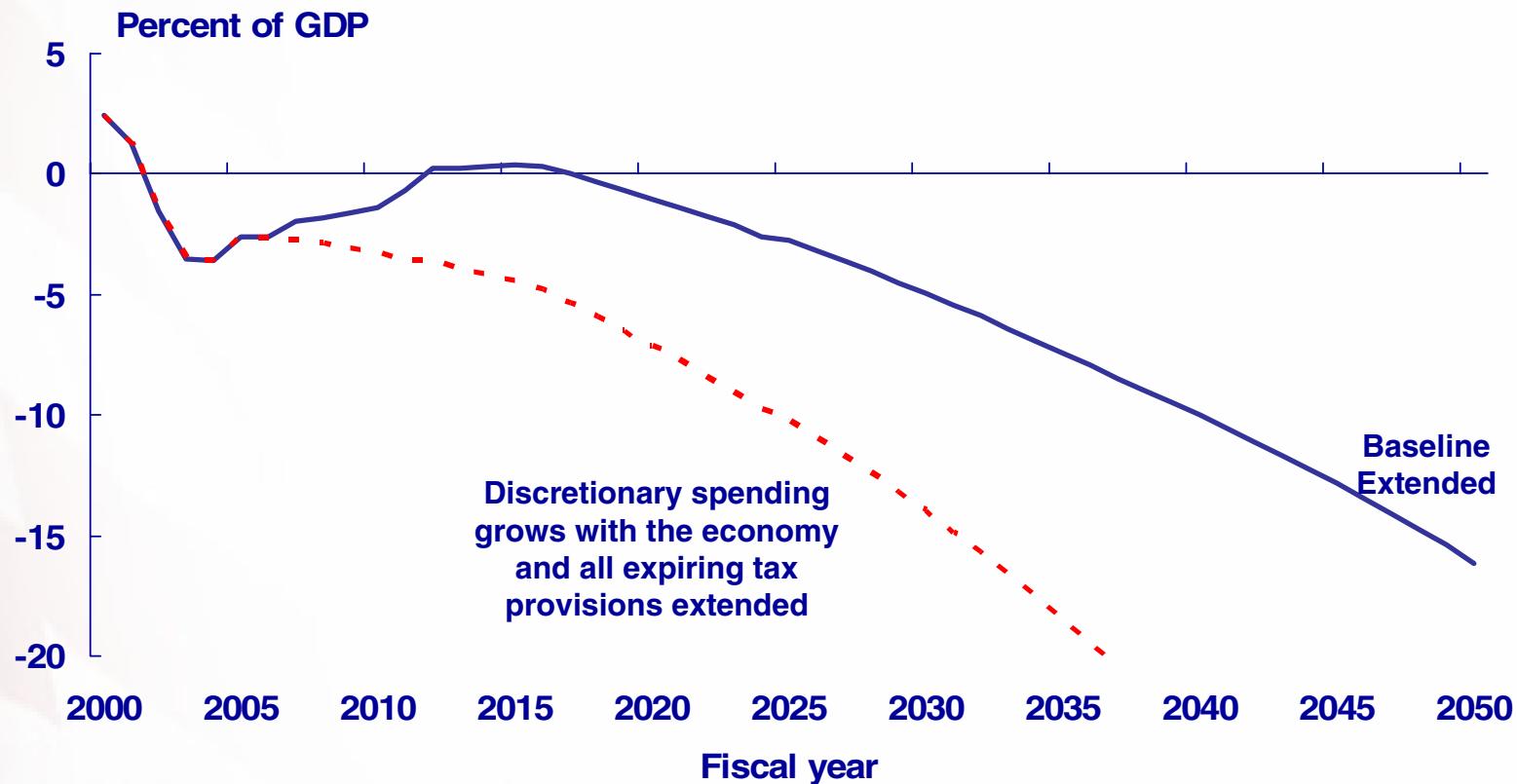
# Interpreting Long-term Simulations

- Long-term simulations provide illustrations--not precise forecasts--of the relative fiscal and economic outcomes associated with alternative policy paths.
- Long-term simulations are useful for comparing the potential outcomes of alternative policies within a common economic framework over the long term.
  - Recognizing the inherent uncertainties of long-term simulations, we have generally chosen conservative assumptions, such as holding interest rates and total factor productivity growth constant. Variations in these assumptions generally would not affect the relative outcomes of alternative policies.
  - The model simulates the interrelationships between the budget and the economy over the long term and does not reflect their interaction during short-term business cycles.
- Long-term simulations are not predictions of what will happen in the future. In reality, policymakers likely would take action before the occurrence of the negative out-year fiscal and economic consequences reflected in some simulated fiscal policy paths.

## Alternative Fiscal Policy Simulations

- **Baseline extended** follows CBO's January 2006 10-year baseline projections which assume that discretionary spending grows with inflation and tax provisions scheduled to expire will actually do so. After 2016, discretionary spending is assumed to grow with the economy, and revenue is held constant as a share of GDP at the 2016 level of 19.7 percent.
- **Discretionary spending grows with GDP after 2006 and all expiring tax provisions are extended** follows CBO's January 2006 10-year baseline projections except that discretionary spending grows with the economy after 2006 and all expiring tax provisions are extended. After 2016, revenue is held constant as a share of GDP at the 2016 level of 17.6 percent.
- After the first 10 years, in both simulations
  - Social Security and Medicare spending is based on the May 2006 Trustees' intermediate projections. Medicaid spending is based on CBO's December 2005 long-term projections under mid-range assumptions.
  - Social Security and Medicare benefits are paid in full after the trust funds are exhausted through borrowing from the general fund to meet any payroll tax shortfall.

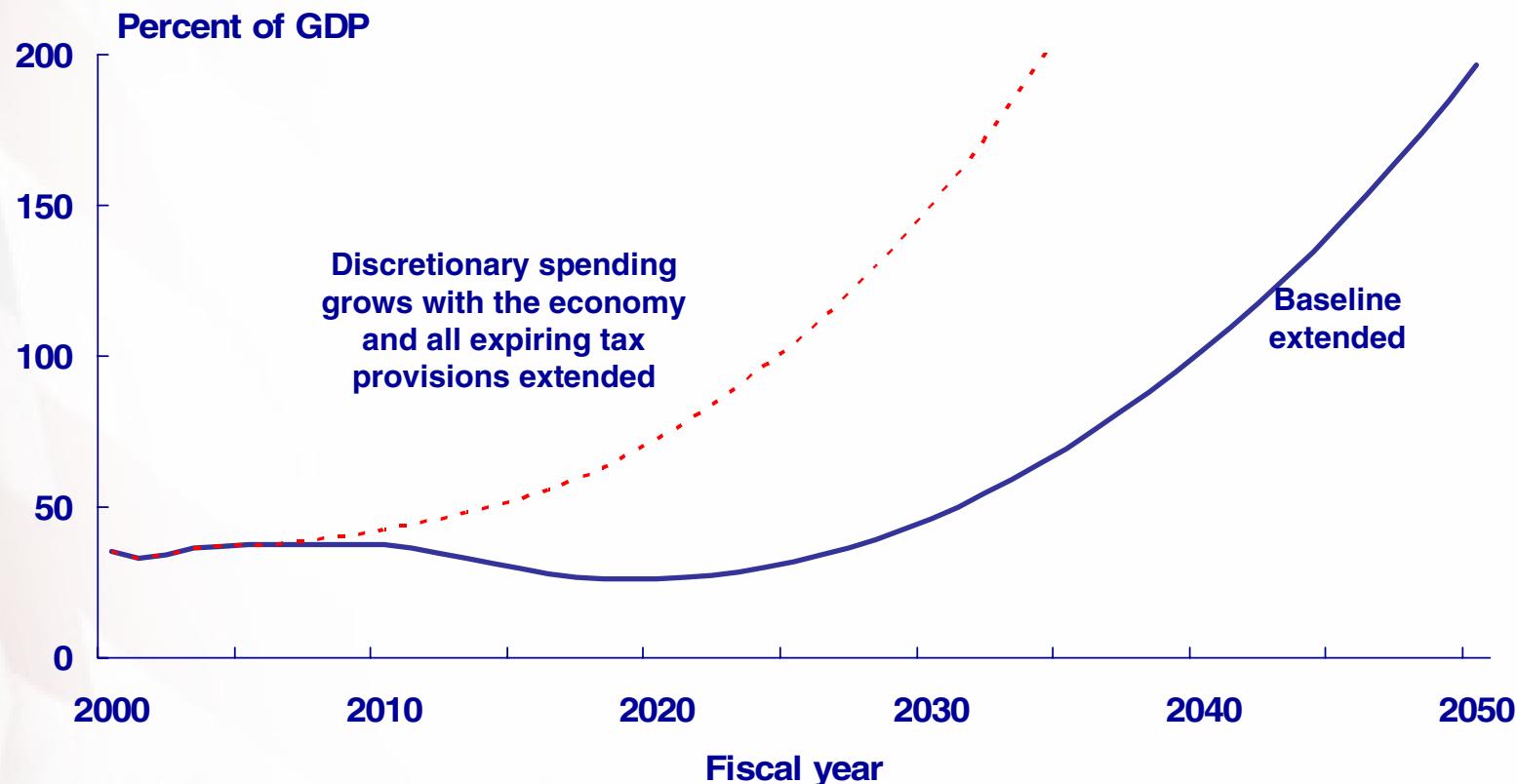
# Unified Surpluses and Deficits as a Share of GDP Under Alternative Fiscal Policy Simulations



Note: Assume currently scheduled Social Security benefits are paid in full throughout the simulation period.

Source: GAO's May 2006 analysis.

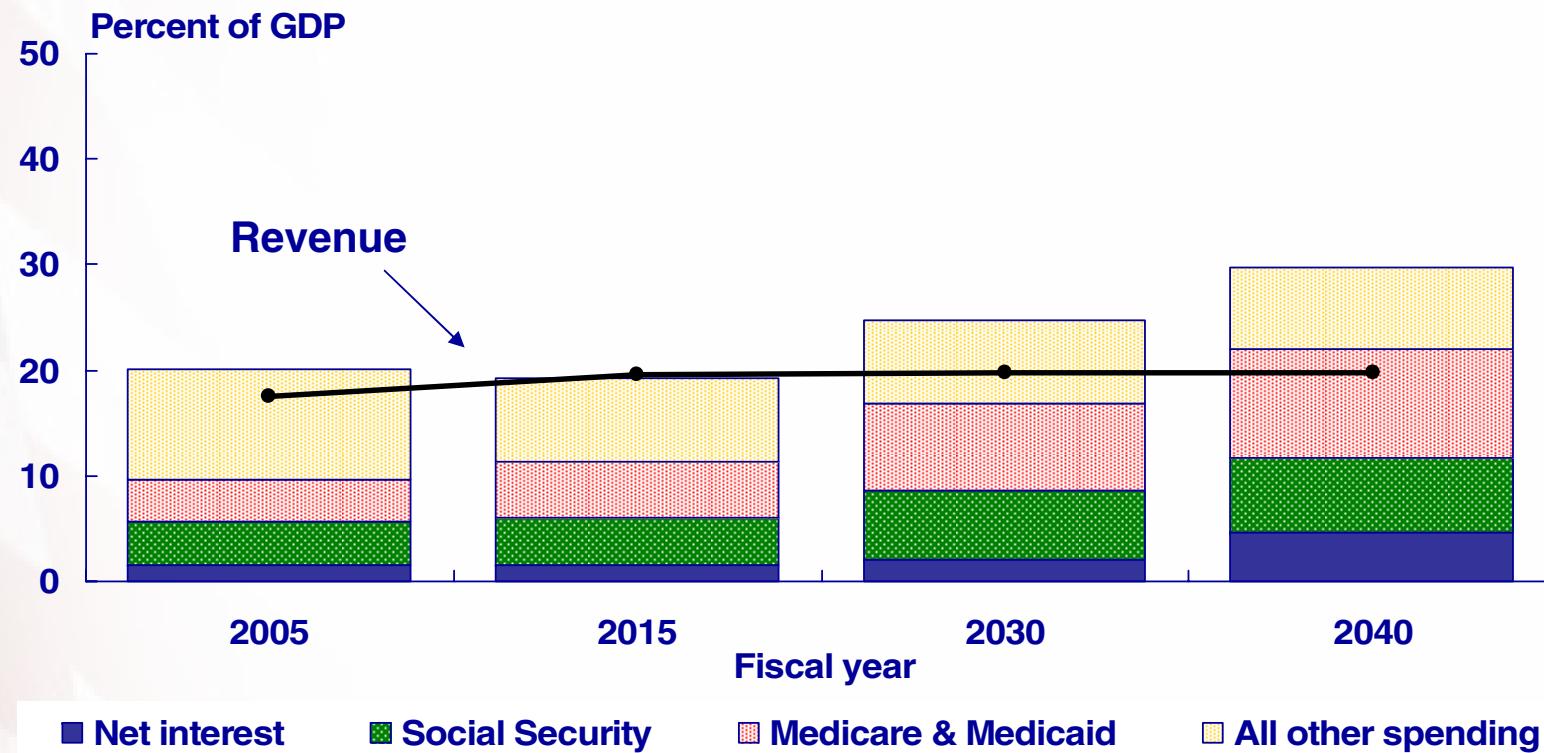
# Debt Held by the Public as a Share of GDP Under Alternative Fiscal Policy Simulations



Note: Assume currently scheduled Social Security benefits are paid in full throughout the simulation period.

Source: GAO's May 2006 analysis.

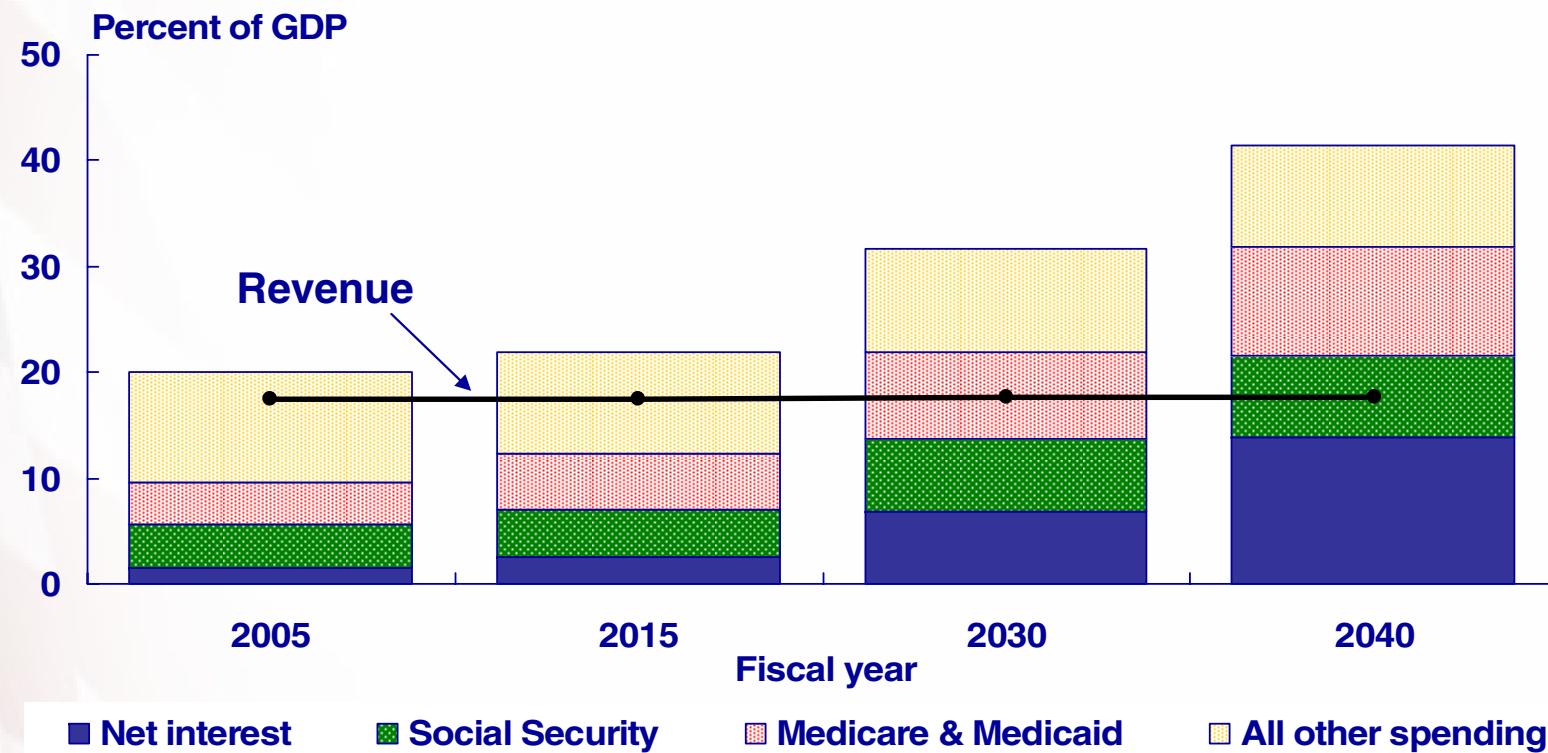
# Composition of Spending as a Share of GDP Under Baseline Extended



Notes: In addition to the expiration of tax cuts, revenue as a share of GDP increases through 2016 due to (1) real bracket creep, (2) more taxpayers becoming subject to the AMT, and (3) increased revenue from tax-deferred retirement accounts. After 2016, revenue as a share of GDP is held constant.

# Composition of Spending as a Share of GDP

## Assuming Discretionary Spending Grows with GDP After 2006 and All Expiring Tax Provisions are Extended



Note: This includes certain tax provisions that expired at the end of 2005, such as the increased AMT exemption amount.

Source: GAO's May 2006 analysis.

# Key Model Assumptions Under Baseline Extended

Model inputs	Assumptions
Surplus/deficit	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; GAO simulations thereafter
Social Security spending (OASDI)	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; thereafter based on 2006 Social Security Trustees' intermediate projections
Medicare spending	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; thereafter based on 2006 Medicare Trustees' intermediate projections that assume per enrollee Medicare spending gradually slows from 1.4 percent faster than the GDP per capita in 2030 to about the same rate as GDP per capita by 2080.
Medicaid spending	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; thereafter based on CBO's December 2005 long-term projections under Scenario 2 that assume per enrollee Medicaid spending grows with GDP per capita plus 1 percent over the long term.
Other mandatory spending	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; thereafter increases at the rate of economic growth (i.e., remains constant as a share of GDP)
Discretionary spending	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; thereafter increases at the rate of economic growth
Revenue	CBO's January 2006 baseline through 2016; thereafter remains constant at 19.7 percent of GDP (CBO's projection in 2016)
Nonfederal saving: gross saving of the private sector and state and local government sector	Increases gradually over the first 10 years to 18.6 percent of GDP (the average nonfederal saving rate from 1950-2005)
Current account balance (percent of GDP)	From 2006-2016, 2005 share of GDP plus one-third of any change in gross national saving from 2005; thereafter equal to 2016 nominal level plus one-third of any change in gross national saving from 2005
Labor: growth in hours worked	2006 Social Security Trustees' intermediate projections
Total factor productivity growth	1.4 percent through 2016 (CBO's January 2006 short-term assumption); 1.4 percent thereafter (long-term average from 1950-2005)
Inflation (percent change in GDP price index)	CBO January 2006 baseline through 2016; 1.8 percent thereafter (CBO's projection in 2016)
Interest rate (on publicly held debt)	Rate implied by CBO's January 2006 baseline net interest payment projections through 2016; 5.1 percent thereafter (the rate implied in 2016)

Notes: These assumptions apply to our base simulation, Baseline Extended. For alternative fiscal policy simulations, certain assumptions are varied, which are noted in the discussion of the alternative paths.

Source: GAO's May 2006 analysis.